

Belladonna

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Belladonna

by [Krystal69](#)

Summary

The aftermath of Penelope's poisoning goes a little differently.

Notes

See the end of the work for [notes](#)

- Translation into Русский available: [Belladonna](#) by [03Mouse_Midnightman45](#)

Chapter 1

Chapter Notes

For those unaware or have only read the webtoonz and you want to know what happens later, Yvonne comes back 5 days before Penelope's coming of age ceremony (different from the game, when she comes the day of). They have Penelope's coming of age ceremony anyways with the intention of postponing Yvonne's return announcement until after, but a brainwashed Derrick brings her anyways and tries to crash the party.

Penelope handles it with grace then drinks a glass of poison that was meant for Yvonne. Yvonne most likely poisoned said glass and meant to drink the poison herself, then blame Penelope and get her killed and out of the way, but Penelope, like a suicidal badass, just drinks the poison herself in an attempt to end the game.

The actual light novel has a different aftermath, I wrote my own because I felt like Penelope is really missing a breakdown scene.

She wakes up and the first thing she knows is pain. Scratchy, parched throat. Aching, *aching* everything. Burning lungs. Throbbing head, everything hurt.

Breathing shallow, but substantial breaths, she cracked her eyes open. She was momentarily blinded by the little light filtering through the curtains but readjusted relatively quickly.

She was able to turn her head a little to see someone wringing a towel over a bowl near her.

"Em'ly?" she scratched out.

Her maid stilled, then whirled around to look at her in shock before jumping up and calling for a doctor.

Her ears rang at the shrill noise. Emily's calls quieted down as soon as she heard her groans of pain and was frantic in grabbing something off to her side. Something cool pressed against her lips and she instinctively opened her mouth to allow refreshing water to soothe her parched throat.

She greedily took the drops that Emily offered her until they were interrupted by the appearance of the doctor, who looked awed and relieved when he saw her.

“Lady Eckhart! I am relieved to see you awake,” the doctor said. “I understand this is sudden, but might I ask how you feel and what you remember?”

What she remembered? Her head throbbed and all that filled her mind was herself, her real self in that mirror that she was blocked out of due to that damned event she was forced to accept.

Her eyes shot open and she turned her head to see the white game window flash next to her.

You paid [500 million gold] to enter Hidden Route!

From now on, you will not be able to check the level of favorability other than the color of the gauge bar, and if you follow the quest, you will receive a hidden ending and reward!

An unexpected quest has been created! Keep [the piece of ancient magic mirror] in a safe place.

Damn it all.

She must have been silent for too long as she read and despaired at her continuing situation because the doctor spoke, “There is a meeting to investigate your poisoning, however we've alerted the meeting to your awakening. Your family and the Marquis should be coming in soon to see you, and maybe see if you could share some information with them.”

Penelope's eyes were unfocused to the rest of the doctor's ramblings, latching onto the topic of the Marquis. Why was she suddenly filled with strong feelings of hurt and anger to hearing ‘the Marquis’?

The door burst open and her family rushed in, and with them, memories from the banquet came flooding in. The Duke threw himself to the edge of her bed and went to go hug her when he was stopped by the doctor, commenting something about her still being too fragile.

But all Penelope could see was the white hair and blue eyes of the Marquis.

Vinter.

All the feelings of betrayal and anguish erupted from her at once. With a strength unknown to her, she flung herself at the Marquis' chest, practically feral in the way she swore she was frothing from the mouth.

Vinter lost his balance and fell to the floor, Penelope pounding at his chest all the way.

"Penelope!" The Duke screamed.

Reynold ran forward to pull her off Vinter but flinched back at the despaired shriek that erupted from his hysterical sister.

"How could you?!"

"Wha..." Vinter muttered, eyes wide in shock and too confused to do anything more.

Penelope's shoulders began to shake and she weakly grabbed Vinter's shirt when she couldn't find the strength to feebly punch at his chest anymore. "Why did you save me? Why didn't you just let me die?! I was so close... so close!- I..." Big, fat tears rolled down her cheeks, "I want to go home."

And like a dam had broken, heart wrenching sobs tore out of her. She didn't care about this stupid game anymore, she didn't care about what all anyone thought of her or how they reacted. She couldn't even see the damned Affection Scores anymore but it didn't matter. All that she knew was that she was lonely, and afraid, and so tired, and she wanted, desperately, to go home.

Back to her body in Korea that was still asleep on her bed with her phone by her head. Back to a place where she could make her life without constantly fearing death, where she was just getting her life started without the hell of living with her family.

She just wanted to go *home*.

The Marquis couldn't do anything but stare up, too alarmed to disturb the haunting wails from the girl on top of him.

The rest of the room were in a similar state of shock and distress, wanting to help but unable to do anything but watch and process the grief they somehow overlooked from their most prized family member.

"I- I want to g-go home. I don't want to be h-here any- any more," she hiccuped and sobbed out. "I... I miss my mom, I want my mom. I want to go home. Please let me go back. Let me go back!"

"Oh, my lady..." Emily felt her heart breaking as she instinctively covered her mouth as she cried with Penelope. She had never seen her lady so distraught, and hearing her plead for her mother and her home only shattered her heart further.

Without realizing what she was doing, she ran to Penelope and enveloped her in a hug, shushing her while she gently pulled her off the Marquis and onto her lap. Penelope weakly fought against the restraint but gave into soft reassurances and warmth her maid offered.

"When, when will this n-nightmare end? I'm so tired, when will it stop? I want to go home, please send me home!" She continued to beg and plea, unseeing or uncaring of the world around her, only stuck in the swirling anguish that had welled up and overflowed inside her.

She wasn't sure how long she laid there wailing and sobbing in Emily's arms before she was finally too tired to do more than the occasional hiccup and sniffle. She gave up trying to keep her eyes open and leaned bonelessly against Emily. She remembered the vague impression of being lifted, then nothing but numbing darkness that swallowed her.

Chapter 2

Chapter Summary

A conversation between Penelope and Reynold, in which Reynold might finally get it through his thick skull that he was a shit person and an even shittier brother.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

She wished she could say her days passed in relative peace since her breakdown, but it was anything but.

Her screams asking why she couldn't die cemented the fact her poisoning was self-inflicted, much to the dismay of the Duke and Reynold who were trying to deny it. Derrick had tried to push the narrative that she did it for attention, but was apparently shut down after witnessing the mess she made of herself when she first woke up. The only good thing about the situation was that the First Prince wasn't there to see her shameless meltdown.

She was, thankfully, mostly left alone the days following, and the investigation was put on hold until she recovered enough to properly explain herself. No one mentioned her breakdown, and the only thing that told her that she didn't dream the entire thing up was how everyone treated her.

It was frankly exhausting to be treated like a glass doll and watch as everyone walked eggshells around her, but a rest was a rest, she supposed.

Her brief respite was, of course, interrupted by-

“Penelope!” Light pink hair and loud mouthed Reynold came barging in.

She held in a deep sigh and she turned to greet her unwanted guest with all the hospitality of a cactus, “What do you want?”

“I-… Can’t a guy come see his bedridden sister after she…” he trailed off, uncharacteristic in his attempt to find a delicate way to word the situation.

“After she, what? Tried to kill herself? Deliberately drank poison? Attacked a Marquis and sullied the family name, yet again?”

“That’s not-!” Reynold raised his voice but quickly quieted down, thinking better than to yell at a patient. “Just… I just want to know *why*…”

“...” Penelope’s eyes were shadowed by her hair so Reynold couldn’t get a good look at her expression, but her lips were in a firm line. “What do you think would have happened, realistically?”

He was taken aback. “What?”

She finally lifted her head and met his eyes with a blazing expression, “Realistically, what would have happened if Yvonne drank the poison instead of me?”

Reynold’s mouth hung open, “How could you ask something so cold hearted?” He didn’t want to think of losing his sister again. He hated how easily Yvonne and Penelope overlapped in his mind as he imagined Yvonne in Penelope’s place, her soft pink locks flying up while she stumbled back and tumbled to the ground, throwing up blood. His thoughts spiraled and he couldn’t help but blurt in panic, “You… You must have wanted to see her die in your place! You never wanted her to come back so you must have planned this to-!”

“You would blame *me*,” Penelope interrupted.

Reynold’s eyes widened, and just as quickly as it had come, his anger ceased and was instead replaced with dread. At first it slowly pooled, then a waterfall of awful, *heavy* guilt filled his gut and made him sick.

He opened his mouth to stutter out a response but Penelope cut him off with a harsh glare.

“If it was Yvonne who drank the poison, you would have found any way to blame me, like you tried now. Just like always...” Her expression went dark, “I knew it was poisoned, you’ve heard about the necklace by now. I deliberately switched the cup with poison that was supposed to go to Yvonne so I couldn’t be blamed for something I didn’t do, *yet again*.”

Reynold sputtered, of all the reasons to drink *poison*, “But, that doesn’t mean you had to drink it!”

“Shouldn’t I have? I want to be gone from this world Reynold, you and I both would have gotten what we wanted.”

She scoffed, but that wasn’t what struck Reynold the most. It was the surety of her tone that said she believed every word she said, and the resignation that she truly, honestly thought that she was better off dead.

Something flared in him and he yelled, “I never wanted you gone! Who said I wanted that?!”

“*You did!*” Penelope screamed back with equal fervor. “If you didn’t want that, then why would you frame me for stealing Yvonne’s necklace?”

“I already apologized for that!”

“Oh? Do you not remember the other 6 years I’ve lived here? Why would you only ridicule and insult me when we ran into each other, then? Why would you sit there and do *nothing* while I was spit on and hurt and embarrassed by your own staff? You never cared about me, you even told me to starve and *die* on multiple occasions! What reason have you *ever* given me to believe you?!”

Each instance she yelled drove a painful stake of guilt into his heart.

What he didn't see as more than a few words said in anger or frustration caused such an impact on his sister. He made her think she was unwanted, to the point of knowingly drinking poison.

Ever since her initial change, Reynold felt remorseful of his petty, stupid actions that he did to take his anger and grief out on Penelope for seeing Yvonne's place be so easily filled by a girl that didn't even slightly resemble his sweet, innocent little sister.

Penelope was the opposite of Yvonne. From the first moment he laid eyes on her, it was all he could think of. He couldn't help but hold her to an impossible standard when all he could see was someone unworthy standing in Yvonne's place.

Yvonne's beauty was innocent and charming, while Penelope was prickly and ill-tempered, from her sharp eyes to her unruly hair, she was unapproachable. Where Yvonne looked at him with warmth and adoration, Penelope only gazed at him with cold, surly expressions. Yvonne was bright and inviting, Penelope was bitter and cynical. They were a walking contradiction of light and dark, and Reynold had always *hated* that.

How could someone so unpleasant and *cold* take his little sister's place? She never belonged here, and she even had the audacity to be *ungrateful* when she would've stayed on the streets if their father hadn't taken her in.

Their conflict in the attic slapped him in the face with a harsh reality that he'd deliberately turned a blind eye to, Penelope was *alone*.

She was thrown into a position of authority and responsibility when she originally had nothing. She lost her mother, she didn't have a home, she was starving on the streets, she couldn't even *read*... and suddenly she was told to act like the daughter of a Duke.

It wasn't that she was ungrateful when she spent hoards of gold on jewelry and dresses, she simply didn't know what else to *do*. None of them had taught her, in fact, they did nothing but neglect her. If that wasn't bad enough, they alienated her and made it impossible for her to ask for help until she was drowning, and even then, none of them saw what she was going through until their eyes were pried open with her near death and break down.

He screwed up beyond repair.

“Penelope, I...”

“Save it,” she looked away. “I’m tired now, and I don’t have the energy to talk anymore. You’ve heard my reason, now leave.” And with that, she turned on her side facing away from him, signaling a clear end to the conversation.

“...Yeah, okay,” he said, and left the room without another word.

Chapter End Notes

Listen, trauma makes us all react differently to things. Grief makes us lash out, depression makes us withdrawn or short, emotional abuse and trauma make for a whole load of PTSD and leave us without proper ways to cope or react healthily... However that does NOT mean you should have to take that kind of abuse. It’s up to them to fix, not you to deal with.

slams hands on table Penelope deserves(/ed :() better, screw the Eckharts!

Oh also! The necklace referred to is a magical item Penelope wore during the banquet that’s supposed to change colors when the wearer is near toxicity. Callisto and Vinter knew about it, hence why everyone assumed/knew she knowingly drank the poison.

Chapter 3

Chapter Summary

Penelope gathers information and is basically punched in the face with Emily's devotion.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

After her clash with Reynold, she finally decided her time to rest was over.

“Emily,” she called.

Said girl perked up at her voice. It was the first time in days that she asserted herself. The other days since her awakening, she remained silent and mostly just slept, or pretended to be too exhausted to talk if anyone attempted to engage her in conversation. She didn’t want to talk to anyone when she was still despairing over her vision before she woke up.

The mirror, her real world self... if only she had died or was able to press Reject on that bullshit *Hidden Quest!*... Whatever the case, this game was determined to keep her in this world. Reynolds appearance helped to remind her that she couldn’t pretend to be sick forever (though she really was for a while). She had already tried on countless occasions to feign sickness to no avail.

So it was time to start again, this time without the help of the Favorability gauges and with possibly the entire house against her. The best place to start when you didn’t have a plan was to get information.

“What has she been doing while I was asleep?” she asked.

Emily cocked her head, “Her?” then lit up with understanding, “Oh, you mean the commoner!”

And to say Penelope was confused would be an understatement. She was essentially comatose for an entire week. It was prime time for Yvonne to enchant the entire household, yet Emily’s response wasn’t that of someone brainwashed...

“The Duke has ordered her to be confined to her room until the case was settled,” Emily said with a satisfied grin.

“Confined?” she asked with furrowed brows.

“Yes! You have heard of the investigation into your Lady’s poisoning, correct?” Emily then stopped and looked around conspiratorially, then leaned in to whisper, “While not all the details are clear, there is a rumor going around that Miss Yvonne is suspect of putting the poison in your cup.”

Penelope’s eyes widened at that and sputtered, “*What?*”

Not only was the household not brainwashed yet, but the protective family of the lost Duke’s daughter may actually *suspect* her?!

Emily, spurred on by Penelope’s reaction, resumed talking with enthusiasm, “The investigation has determined the most likely thing that happened was that someone deliberately poisoned yours or Yvonne’s cup. However, based assumption that though you became aware of the poison as you were about to drink it, you were not the one to prepare it, which means that the culprit is likely still out there.

“The investigation involves both the Marquis Vinter and the Imperial family on behalf of the First Prince, so no matter how unbelievable it was to the Lords, they were left with no choice but to confine Yvonne as a potential suspect.”

Penelope was left floundering at all the information that had been dumped on her. Just how much of the original story changed?

She sat unmoving trying to process everything, but wasn't given much time as Emily's expression saddened. "My lady... I will not ask why you decided to drink the poison but," her voice cracked, "I was so worried for you, Lady Penelope. You have not idea how much sleep I lost because I was afraid you wouldn't wake up."

Penelope smiled gently to soothe her maid, "You've had a hard time, Emily."

Emily quickly brushed her arm over her eyes and sniffled, "I'm so relieved you're okay, Lady Penelope. Please allow me to continue serving you, I would be so lost without you as my master."

Though outwardly she continued to smile, on the inside she was awestruck at her maid's enduring loyalty. She was sure that by now Yvonne would have brainwashed the entire staff and love interests. Yet, as she promised, Emily remained by her side for no other reason than because she was devoted to Penelope, and Penelope alone. Maybe the effects of brainwashing could be inhibited? Or maybe she simply hadn't gotten to her quite yet. Regardless, "I'll grant you a reward for all your hard work, Emily."

"No! I mean-, that is-, to serve your ladyship is truly enough for me," Emily rushed out, "I don't desire anything but to continue working at your side."

"Emily," she said in a tone that made Emily snap to attention, "I would like to reward you. I truly can't thank you enough for your dedication and loyalty, please let me thank you by granting a wish of yours. Ask for anything - a request, a favor, the finest jewelry, a title, *anything*, Emily. Say the word and I will grant you any one desire that is in my power."

She could see Emily about to vehemently refuse again, and continued, "This is also my way of making amends. I'm sorry for worrying you like that, I was not thinking clearly with all that happened. At the time... my greatest thought at the time was that I didn't want to be there anymore, I was not thinking about how my actions might have affected you."

Emily looked down at her feet, for some reason a light blush dusted her cheeks. “I had a hard time, but it was nothing compared to that of the First prince.”

Oh? Now this was a surprise, “The First prince?”

“Yes! He sat by your bedside for three days and three nights without eating or sleeping, simply sat and begged you not to die, and... Oh, I am sorry, my lady, I was out of line,” Emily stopped her excited rambling as she saw Penelope’s face distort. “He had to leave to solve the situation in the North. Apparently the rebels were much stronger than they anticipated, and they had no choice but to call the First prince for his strength and guidance to prevent invasion. It was the only thing that could tear him from your side. However, it is my understanding that he will be back as soon as he takes care of that to formally ask for your hand in marriage.”

Penelope stared at Emily with her mouth agape, *that Prince? He* was the one who sat by her bedside until he was on the brink of collapse and almost didn’t fulfill his Imperial obligations? *For her?* And what was this about marriage?!

Her questions were glossed over as Emily’s face fell again, “We were all so worried for you, my lady. The Young Duke has become unapproachable, Lord Reynold has been on even more of a short fuse lately, and the Duke has drunken himself into a stupor so many times that the doctor has been worried for his lordship’s health... myself and the rest of the staff have been in such low-spirits waiting for you to awake.”

Emily stepped back and took a shaky breath, “My lady, you said you would grant me a wish... My only wish is that you do not do something like this again,” She clutched her hand over her heart and bowed deeply, “Please, don’t take your life and leave us all behind,” Emily pleaded.

Penelope stared at the trembling, bowed form of her maid with wide eyes, and after a moment of contemplation commanded, “Emily, raise you head.”

Emily hesitated a moment and obeyed, meeting her gaze as tears leaked from her eyes. She got up and took Emily’s hands in her own, “If that is your wish, then I shall swear on the name of Penelope Eckhart, that I will not take my own life and leave you without your master.”

Emily's face broke into a bright, joyful smile as she began to cry in earnest relief. "Yes, my lady."

Penelope tugged her into a hug and pushed Emily's face into her shoulder as their roles from days prior reversed.

"My- my lady," Emily squeaked and tried to struggle away, "It, it is not proper for- for a maid like I to be comforted in such a way."

Penelope shushed her, "I have worried you greatly, you've had to deal with so much on your own, Emily. But it's okay now, I'm here. Besides, perhaps I just felt like a hug."

Her obvious excuse succeeded, and she could pinpoint the moment Emily's resolve broke. Her shoulders became damp as Emily sobbed, finally releasing her pent up desolation and worry.

The hug accomplished the need to comfort her maid, and allowed Penelope to hide her conflicted expression from her as well.

Even if she didn't take her own life, she would eventually leave this world or die trying. Her promise was meaningless, but it wouldn't matter soon because... Soon the household would be brainwashed by Yvonne, and she would most likely die trying to get out of this game. The seeming inevitability of her end made her sick, but she had endured this long hadn't she?

I'm sorry, Emily. The rope you've latched onto is rotten.

Though guilt and despair swirled in her heart, she basked in the warmth of the hug and was happy to have done at least one thing right in this world. There were so few things that she thanked this world for, but Emily, her faithful maid, was one that she would forever be grateful for. Whether she lived or died, she would cherish her memory.

Chapter End Notes

For those who have not read the light novel, Yvonne, who is not actually Yvonne but an ancient evil sorceress called “Leila”, brainwashes/enchants the entire household in the original game with this magic mirror (can anyone guess what that mirror is? *cough fragment to the real world cough*), and it’s around this time that Yvonne gets the entire house under her control, hence why Penelope was so shocked to learn that that was actually not the case.

Is my favoritism for Emily obvious at all? Big fan of her and Callisto. The only two people deserving of anything in this evil game, other than Penny of course.

When I said kind of healing in the tags, I meant more giving the family their comeuppance and getting Penelope to allow herself to feel good emotions for once than actual, long-term healing.

Anyways, I lied. This bad boy is gonna be 5 chapters instead of my original 2-3. I don't know why either.

If you would like to binge read this fic, I highly recommend popping back on Tuesday, it should be all posted by then.

Chapter 4

Chapter Summary

Derrick sucks and the Duke tries, that's my chapter on them. Oh, and Vinter is there but we don't talk about him right now (or ever).

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Once around a week had passed, she was cleared by the doctor to move around and leave her bed, and the investigation began again. Penelope was called to give a brief testimony on her side of the story.

Her only goal for the meeting was *don't die*.

The doors to her father's study opened, and she stepped into the lion's den with her head held high.

As she made her way to her seat, she observed everyone in the room. Reynold was burning a hole in the ground with how hard he avoided making eye contact with her. She fully avoided Vinter's gaze and instead focused on the Duke, who was sitting at his desk with an unknown expression. Derrick was dutifully standing at his side, emanating the hostile aura of a guard dog.

The Duke nodded as she sat down, "I'm glad to see you out of bed, Penelope. Would you like some tea before we start?"

"Spare the formalities, please. I am still recovering and would like to return to rest as soon as possible," she answered bluntly.

She had already decided before coming in that she would end the meeting as quickly as possible. Until she could grasp her situation a little better, the less time she spent around her potential death flags, the better.

The Duke drooped at the rejection while Vinter took charge, “Of course, we will ask a few specific questions, however we mostly just want to know your side of the story, Lady Penelope.”

“Hmm, where to start...” she pretended to ponder.

“Wherever you feel comfortable with is fine.”

Well if that’s the case, then she better start strong out the gate and get the elephant in the room out of the way, “It is as I’m sure all of you suspected, or have heard from Reynold by now, I knew there was poison in my drink due to the necklace, and drank the poison on purpose.”

“*WHAT?!*” The room burst into uproar.

She allowed the questions and demands to explain herself to go in one ear and out the other and she instead nailed Reynold with a quizzatory glance. Judging by the reaction of the others, he for some reason *hadn’t* told them of their earlier argument. *Interesting.*

The Duke called everyone back to attention, which Derrick in particular was not keen on following, causing their father to yell in an attempt to drown out Derrick’s accusations and demands. The situation reminded her of old American courtroom dramas, where a judge would bang their gavel to bring the room to order after something unbelievable happened.

Once the room was finally in a state of tense calm, the Duke pressed gently, “Penelope, darling, why would you say such a thing?”

"I'm sorry, I thought you had already worked this out in the investigation, I simply wanted to confirm your suspicions," she shrugged.

The Duke flinched as if he were struck. "My daughter... Why would you willingly drink poison?"

She looked at her nails with a bored expression, and thought carefully of all the responses she could say. From blaming them, to spilling out the truth, to lying and wallowing on the ground for forgiveness, they all crossed her mind, but she was tired of sucking up, and finally settled on, "Does it matter?"

"*You-*," Derrick growled, but was held back when the Duke pinned him with a harsh glare.

He turned back to her with a earnest expression, "Of course it does."

She sighed in irritation, but her tone lost some of its edge, "I don't see how knowing would help push the investigation forward."

"This investigation is to find out exactly what happened to ensure it doesn't happen again. It helps us greatly to know the motives and perspectives from all the players involved, including yours, Lady Penelope," Vinter answered.

Ah yes, the traitor. She hadn't seen Vinter since she attacked him like a chimpanzee and screamed atop of him. Her eyes slid to the wall behind him, where a fascinating chip in the paint grabbed her attention. The feelings of utter hurt and betrayal had yet to leave her, and she had no intention of attempting to renew the relationship with her insurance when he ripped her from her escape.

"Please, you must have had a reason," the Duke urged.

"Do I need a good reason to drink poison?" she deadpanned, causing his expression to falter.

It's not like she could say, "*Well if you really want to know, I tried to kill myself to have even a sliver of a chance at returning to my body! No, not this body, my REAL body in this place called 'Korea' because I'm not actually the Penelope you knew. Actually, you're all characters from a game I was playing before I fell asleep, and I've been trying to get along with all of you so I could reach the ending and get back, but I ran out of time to accomplish my goal and didn't see any reason to try living anymore. You know, the normal stuff.*"

Yeah, that'd go over well.

The hiccup in the room's energy was quickly forgotten as Derrick exclaimed, "That is precisely why you must have done it for attention! You couldn't stand that Yvonne had taken the spotlight off you for even a moment and you drank the poison if it meant everyone would pay attention to you again!"

She answered with an incredulous look, "Is that what you really think?"

Derrick's expression clouded for a moment, as if he wasn't expecting her to challenge him, but quickly cleared and came back with the same level of conviction, "Yes, there couldn't be any other reason that makes sense for you to do it." He even had the audacity to look smug about it, as if he were a detective who deduced a great mystery.

Well fine then, if that's the angle he wanted to push, then she was more than happy to accommodate if it meant she could escape this atmosphere even a moment sooner, "Fine, you caught me, I drank poison for attention."

"Penelope!" someone called.

"But I wasn't the one to poison the glass."

"Then who are you suggesting *did*?" Reynold, who had been uncharacteristically quiet the entire time, asked.

She went back to admiring her nails, “How should I know? I have many enemies as the rabid dog of the Eckharts, you should know this more than I do.”

She heard a groan in exasperation from her side and saw the Marquis rub his temples from her peripheral vision, and had to stifle a laugh.

“Well, I suppose that is all we can get out of you in terms of the investigation right now. We will meet again to discuss at a later date. Hopefully by then your mind will have recovered enough to assist us properly,” the Duke sighed.

Penelope also wanted to sigh a breath of relief that they were letting her go so easily -

“Well, if the interrogation part is over, I must ask everyone but Penelope to leave the room.”

- ...Or maybe it was too early to do that.

Reynold made an indignant noise as the rest of the room voiced similar protests.

“Father!” Derrick exclaimed from next to him.

The Marquis also narrowed his eyes, “Duke Eckhart, the investigation is no where near closing. Surely what you are going to discuss should be in front of all those involved?”

But the Duke was not swayed, “I was planning on adjourning the meeting for today anyways. Penelope is still recovering, and as soon as I am done talking to her, I plan on sending her back to rest. However, what I plan on discussing with Penelope is strictly between family.”

Derrick cut in, “Then you should allow me to stay, Father. As the next Duke of the household, I-”

Their father held his hand up to silence Derrick and continued, “Though it concerns many in the room, it is a topic that I feel would be more beneficial to talk about in a *comfortable* setting. Whatever information Penelope is comfortable with sharing, I will inform you of afterwards. For now, leave my office.”

Vinter's cheeks flushed in anger, but begrudgingly got up, knowing when to give up.

Reynold's conflicted gaze flickered to Penelope as he hesitated to leave, but soberly followed Vinter out the room until only Derrick remained.

“Father, I must insist that I stay. Whatever it is you are going to discuss, I am not only family, but I must hear if Penelope is going to be a danger to Yvonne,” Derrick said.

“*Derrick*,” The Duke hissed, “Your behavior recently has been unbecoming for a Young Duke. I will call you in to discuss punishment, and I must rethink how strict I am with your training once I'm done here. Now go, that is an order.”

The finality in his tone must have finally sunk in because Derrick pressed his lips together and strode out with all the grace of a child who didn't get his way.

Penelope watched the entire exchange with mild interest, and waited until the doors clicked shut after Derrick's retreating form.

The Duke's attention settled on her. She knew he probably wanted to talk about her breakdown, but was completely unwilling to start the conversation

She sat in silence until the Duke gathered his wits, “Penelope, my dear... Do you truly want to leave?”

She knit her eyebrows together, *of course* she wanted to leave. She was desperate to escape from this world that forced her to suck up to characters she hated. All while this psychotic game tried to kill her at every turn.

She wanted to go home to Korea, where she would finally study archeology like she'd always wanted to. She wanted to be anywhere but here, but she was sure that wasn't what he was asking, and chose to stay silent instead.

The Duke sighed and looked overwhelmed with exhaustion.

She hadn't noticed earlier with all that was going on. But now, as her attention focused on him, she finally noticed how wrecked her father looked.

She could see the dark bags under his eyes. The slump of his posture, as if he was shouldering the weight of the world. His usual pristine clothes were wrinkled like he hadn't changed in days.

The Duke sighed a deep, weary sigh, "You... when you woke up the first time, you said you wanted to go home. You called out for your mother, for someone to take you home... Penelope, *this* is your home, but if it brings you so much misery that you felt your only way out was to drink *poison*, I..."

The Duke cleared his throat and her eyes widened to see him holding back tears. "I see now that I have been nothing but irresponsible when it comes to you, no, *all* my children. You have reminded me of my shortcomings many times recently, yet you still manage to make me see things I have not been able to see before... Penelope, I'm sorry."

And all Penelope could do was sit there.

No matter how many times she heard his apologies, there wasn't one time she didn't think *the real Penelope should have been the one to hear this*.

These people were cruel, selfish, and arrogant beyond belief; poor Penelope had been left stranded with them, forced to bite her tongue and suffocate her emotions until she herself stopped breathing.

How cruel this fate was.

“You can’t even answer your own father anymore. Or maybe you’re trying to spare this old man’s feelings by not telling him a painful truth...” The Duke Eckhart looked down, heartbroken and dejected in his assumptions.

Ah, she must have been silent for too long. “Father, I...” Her voice caught in her throat. Why was she hesitating now? She had nothing to lose anymore, so why couldn’t she say anything.

When she was unable to answer, her father became a little more desperate, “You asked when the nightmare would end, and begged for someone to take you out of it... My daughter, have you been living a nightmare all this time? Have I done nothing to take you out of it, or heaven forbid, am I the one who *caused* it?” His eyes pleaded for an answer that she couldn’t give him.

She averted her gaze, “That’s... what it feels like, sometimes.”

She heard a sharp intake of breath and waited again for him to gather his thoughts because she certainly didn’t know what to say.

“Penelope... What can I do?”

She looked up to meet his eyes.

His loving father eyes, desperate to help his suffering daughter, even when he didn’t know what afflicted her. He was extending his hand to help her, all she needed to do was take it.

She studied his disheveled look - his crooked tie and unshaven face.

She thought of what the actual Penelope might feel if she were the one here. Would she be happy he finally noticed her and gave her the attention she needed? Would she feel disappointed or disgusted at her father's unkempt appearance? Would she throw a tantrum because he asked too late? Or would she be too nice and forgive him again?

It did no good to ask questions she knew she'd never find an answer to, so she forced her thoughts to herself instead.

She needed to get home. It was her one driving motivation to keep moving, to not despair or give up at every turn, but she wasn't sure what to do anymore. She thought she could make it through this game alone, but her obstacles kept getting more difficult to overcome.

Soon, the house would be turned against her. All that she worked up to would be ripped away from her and she was out of time.

She took in her father, who was trying *so hard* to help his daughter that had caused him so much grief. She was almost desperate enough to take his hand, if only she didn't know it would end in misery.

She thought about her past, present, and future, and she answered,

"I don't know."

Chapter End Notes

Despite everything, the Duke is probably the one who has tried to make the most amends with Penelope. He's definitely been clumsy, and does a lot wrong, but between

the 3 family members, he's shown the most care for her feelings and wellbeing.

The moment he gives her that crossbow with the magical bullets was really funny, but more than that, it was an actual thoughtful gift that said, "I'm trying not to control you, but I still want you to make decent decisions and be safe."

Also, I don't actually dislike Vinter that much, it just felt appropriate for the summary, and also because I am going to ignore he exists because it would be a pain in the ass to write when I have no idea what I even feel for him tbh. So for the purpose of my sanity (and Penelope's kinda), he doesn't exist!

For those who haven't read the light novel: The only person in this chapter who is actively under Yvonne/Leila's control is Derrick, who I'm assuming got re-enchanted before this meeting, hence why he was so hostile and accusatory towards Penelope. Even without the mind control, he was still a dick though.

Chapter 5

Chapter Summary

Callisto is back, and with him comes the ending.

Brief light novel context: At one point, Ecklies asks Penelope to run away and she refuses. Also Callisto asks for a contractual marriage with Penelope but she rejects him because she wants love, not a contract relationship. Then she almost dies via poisoning.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

The days dragged by once it everyone knew Penelope's poisoning was self-inflicted. They had no leads on the culprit (though the rumor of Yvonne's involvement was still whispered in the dark corners of the mansion). Reynold stayed out of her way since the argument. The Duke came to see her when he had time. She didn't encounter Derrick because the Duke assigned strict, knighthood training to him as punishment for his continued outbursts.

The days were quiet, until her doors banged against the wall with the force Emily threw them open, "My Lady!" Out of breath with sparkling eyes, Emily exclaimed, "His highness is back!"

Emily's words from days prior flashed in her mind.

"His highness stayed by your bedside for days begging you not to die."

Something between anticipation and dread curled inside her.

"It is my understanding that he will ask for your hand in marriage once he's back."

She leapt to her feet with the intention of... well, she doesn't know. But what she does know is that she can't stay here. She hadn't prepared herself to see Callisto yet. She wouldn't even

know what to say to him if she were to see him so-

“Princess!”

Her plan to escape and gather her thoughts was short lived and she became enveloped in a warm bear hug by none other than the first Prince, the Sun of the Empire himself, Callisto.

She knew she should say something, a greeting, her usual snide remarks. Yet her mind felt fuzzy and warm in his arms and she leaned into him instead.

She breathed him in. It was the same scent she remembers from the cave - musky, piney, a tinge of iron (*blood? Did he really come straight off the battlefield to see me?*). It was so overwhelmingly *Callisto*.

This was the man that continued his relentless pursuit of her, proclaiming love or a marriage of convenience. The man that waited by her bedside for 3 days and nights while she was unconscious. Who was only ripped away from her by the absolute pressing duty as a Prince.

Lost in thought, she almost missed when he mumbled into her hair, “Please, leave with me, Penelope.”

She hummed, then did a double take and pulled away to stare at him, dumbfounded as she realized what he said. “Leave?”

He took her hands into his. The care he held them with made her feel like she were a priceless treasure. “Your maid told me a little of what happened when I left. I knew I shouldn’t have left you alone here. The situation wasn’t even that bad, I don’t know why they called me when they should have been able to handle it fine,” he said with bitterness.

He took a breath and his tone shifted as he stared into her eyes.

“I can take you away from here. I can make sure the Eckharts never bother you again. I can prepare the most grand room for you in the palace. Or we can run away together, just the two of us, so please, Penelope, stay by my side.”

“Take me... away...?” she whispered in disbelief.

He nodded and brushed his lips across her hand, as if sealing his promise with a chivalrous kiss.

She was utterly rocked by his plea.

In the original story, Penelope doesn't leave the mansion as far as she knows. Because of that, she never considered leaving an option when her only possible keys to get out of this world were at the mansion. Even if they brought her nothing but suffering and misery, they were still a chance for her to go home.

The closest she had gotten to leaving was Ecklies' proposition to run away together. She only needed a moment to consider that chance before she turned him down. If she had gone with Ecklies, they would have gotten caught or killed. The Eckhart's hold on her was too strong and they didn't seem inclined to let her go, even when she was sure that's what they all wanted.

Even if she had managed to get away, she would have lived out the rest of her life in constant fear of the rabid wolf she picked up.

So she had given up on the idea of running long ago. Resigned herself to it's impossibility despite her longing to get away from this suffocating house. This house where she saw were parallels to her own life, and phantoms of trauma that she couldn't differentiate from her own experiences or the original Penelope's.

Yet Callisto, with all the assurance in the world, said he would take her away.

“If that’s what you want, I’ll take you away from here. I can make a place for you to come home to, so you won’t be lonely ever again. I’ll give you anything you want, *anything*, so please, come with me.” He continued in her stunned silence, “I can even try what you wanted, *love*, if that’s what you desire. I can’t promise to be good at it or know what I’m doing, but if it’s for you, I’ll love you, even if I’m scared to.”

“Scared? To love me?” The words tumbled from of her mouth before she could stop them.

And Callisto smiled a heart wrenching smile. “I couldn’t tell you before, but the emperor also said he loved my mother, once. As soon as she died from the hardships he put her through, he brought in another Concubine, who tried to have me killed from then on.”

Oh.

“Since then, I’ve only known a life where I’m always on guard and distrustful of those around me. I was scared when you brought up love because... I didn’t want to end up like my father, or you to end up as my mother. I could never believe in something like love when I grew up and saw it as nothing more than a fleeting emotion that tricked my mother into a miserable relationship.”

She processed his confession, and her heart ached at his story as she cursed this game again. The story never went into full detail about Callisto’s past in Normal mode, and she was too busy dying in Hard mode to ever advance far enough to see his backstory in detail.

It was tragic. A young child should never have had to go through that.

The relationship with her mom was, at times, strained as they scraped by in their tiny, one room apartment. She knew her mom loved her, and she loved her mom for raising her as best she could. Even when she later resented her for dying and leaving her alone with her new, wretched family, she still believed in it.

But Callisto grew up in an environment where he wasn’t allowed to seek or accept love. It was all so similar to Penelope and herself when she lived with her family... What a miserable life they all led.

She came back to focus when Callisto sucked in a shaky breath. “I hid behind a contractual marriage, so I wouldn’t have to feel betrayed or shattered if, *when* you decided to leave me. I could look at the contract and say it was a breach of trust, and *that’s* why I felt hurt. I thought it would be better if I could get over these feelings, and I would at least be able to have you by my side. That was enough for me... Or rather, I told myself it had to be enough.

“When you almost died in my arms, I realized that I didn’t want to live a life without you. I don’t care if I’m scared or if you’ll leave me in the end, I need you in my life, Penelope Eckhart. I love you. Wherever you go, I’ll follow you, so please, let me stay by your side,” Callisto begged.

Her breath caught in her throat as she met his eyes. She searched for any flicker of doubt or deceit, but in his intense gaze, all she saw was *truth*. When Callisto said he could take her out of here, he would. When he said he would give her anything, he would. When he said he could try loving her, he would.

“Callisto, I...” She wanted to say yes. She was so tempted to believe him. Believe he would make her happy in this world, all she had to do was say yes and let him take her away. If she left, she could avoid Reynold and Derrick, not to mention *Yvonne*. She could bypass the house being turned against her and wouldn’t have to live in fear anymore.

But was it really that easy? She had been stuck in this game for so long, to suddenly up and leave... It felt *wrong*.

Would the game allow her to do that? What of the story she’d been following this whole time?

But then, in the original story, no one would have cared for Penelope as much as they did. Emily, who was never more than what she assumed was a faceless NPC in the game, became a great source of strength for her. Pennel reformed his ways. The Duke showed father-like tendencies that she couldn’t remember seeing in the game. Reynold and Derrick, and especially Callisto were so *different*... The story changed so much it hardly resembled the original plot line.

She lost the chance to escape via love confession, so did it matter what she did from now on? She still had the hidden quest but if she had to stay in the mansion for that, the game would stop her, right?

If the game was truly different from this timeline then, “Callisto, I need to tell you something.”

Callisto could sense the seriousness in her tone and straightened to give his full attention.

“I’m going to sound crazy,” she muttered. She was losing the nerve to do this. No matter how many times she replayed it in her mind, it was unbelievable. Never in her wildest dreams did she imagine trying to convince someone that she wasn’t who they thought she was.

“Whatever it is, I don’t care. I’ll accept anything from you. And if it’s that unbelievable then you’ll have to keep me by your side and teach me to live with it.” He cracked a grin.

“Hey! I’m being serious here.”

“So am I,” was his swift reply.

She huffed in mock irritation, but his confidence helped ease her nerves. She took a deep breath to steady herself and said, “I’m not actually Penelope Eckhart.”

Callisto raised an eyebrow, but said nothing.

Pushing through feelings of discomfort, she went for it, “I had my own life in a different world far away from here. I lived in a country called Korea, where there wasn’t any magic or monarchy. I was going to college to study archeology and worked to live a happy life. I don’t know how or why, but I got dragged to this world one night when I fell asleep. I woke up as the false daughter of Duke Eckhart.” She looked down to her lap. “I’ve been living life as Penelope Eckhart, trying to do what I could to survive and get back to my world.”

Her knuckles were bone-white with how hard she gripped her dress. “I’m not who you think I am. I’m not a real princess, I’m not the Duke’s daughter, I’m not the real Penelope Eckhart. I’m not even from this world.”

“...”

She squeezed her eyes shut. No one in their right mind would believe her story, least of all the first prince of the empire who slashed her neck on their first meeting. Would he end her life this time for thinking she was trying to trick him? She didn’t think so, but there was always a chance the game would punish her for defecting from the main storyline.

God, this was a dumb idea. Why did she open her mouth? Maybe if she laughed it off as a joke now, he would forgive her and -

“So?”

Her eyes snapped open. She thought she prepared herself for any reaction. Ridicule, disbelief, anger... But the first Prince, arguably her biggest wildcard this game, managed to catch her off her feet again.

“So?!?” she exclaimed. “So it’s unbelievable! I sound crazy!”

“You do,” he agreed.

“Then-!”

“But I believe you.”

She was stunned beyond belief. “*Why?*”

He shrugged, “It’s the words from the one I love, how can I *not* believe you?”

The room became a few degrees warmer. “C-Callisto!” If it weren’t for the matching blush on his face, she would have hit him for his cruel teasing.

Once their moment of fluster passed, the air became heavy again.

“So you’ve been trying to get back home to your world.” His eyes saddened. “Is that why you drank poison?”

While she wasn’t ashamed in her decision to drink poison, the pain in his voice made her heart constrict with regret. She pushed through it and said, “I’ve tried so many different things. Whether it’s ancient wizards or gods, whatever brought me to this world gave me vague instructions. I thought if I followed them and tried really hard to play along with the game, I would be able to get home.

“But nothing worked. I’ve been trying so hard for so long, and I finally reached the deadline of when I was supposed to achieve my goal... I didn’t make it.”

Rough fingers brushed away tears that escaped from her. Looking into Callisto’s sad, caring eyes, she couldn’t help but spill her heart out, “I’m so tired and I just want to go *home*.”

Warm arms pulled her close and she basked in it’s comfort and security. After a moment, he pulled back and tilted her face up to look into her eyes.

“Then I’ll get you home,” he promised.

Her heart stopped. *What?*

His smile softened seeing her shaken expression. “I told you, I would do anything for you.”

He kissed her hand tenderly. Her heart fluttered as he looked at her with the utmost adoration and devotion. “I love you Penelope Eckhart. Whether you’re actually the daughter of a Duke or not, I don’t care. I don’t care about your status or where you’re originally from. I just love you.”

“I love you smiles, even if I don’t see them often. I love your fierceness and bravery, your kindness and warmth. I love your recklessness, I love your wits, I love your boldness, I love your stubbornness. I love you for making me laugh, and I love you for making me want to live in this hellish world.”

He stopped to take a shaky breath. “I want the one I love to live and be *happy*. This world is hell, it’s the same for me. I’ll help you get home, to Korea or whatever it was, and I’ll be right there with you.”

She opened her mouth to reply but Callisto cut her off.

“I’ll follow you, whether that’s by your side or in your heart. I’ll latch onto your memories so you can’t forget me, like a parasite.” He tried to smile but ended up with a grimace. He squeezed her hands and said, “I’ll be with you no matter where you go, so don’t worry. I’ll help you get home.”

She could hear the utter anguish in his voice when he promised her, as if the thought of parting hurt him beyond belief. But he still believed her and said he would get her home. He would sacrifice his heart to make her happy.

“Weren’t you listening, dummy? I missed my chance. I didn’t complete the goal in time.” She meant to laugh but it came out more like a wet gasp.

“But you’re still here aren’t you?”

“That’s...” She was about to say that didn’t matter, but then remembered the *Hidden Quest!* message that popped up. It never explained what the objective of that was, but she could safely assume it wasn’t a love confession anymore.

“You said it yourself, whether it’s wizards or gods, you’re here in this world. If you had really failed then you would’ve died or gotten sent back to your world, right? Don’t give up before it’s over,” he said.

She felt his words resonate deep within her. She never knew she needed to hear that, yet Callisto somehow knew exactly what to say.

This couldn’t be a game event, could it? The genuine love and feeling in Callisto’s voice felt so *real*. The words he spoke could only come from the heart and not some script...

Her hand shook as she reached to turn on the multiple-choice options that she hadn’t touched in so long.

1. [...]
2. [...]
3. [...]

Her eyes widened. *This isn’t part of the game.*

She cautiously looked up to Callisto, who watched her with all the love and patience in the world. This man who had seen her for who she was, and still said he loved her. She wanted to accept his help and live on with him by her side without turning back.

She wanted to but... “What if I really am too late?” she asked. This wasn’t part of the game. It was clear nothing was stopping her from going with him, but what if that meant that she truly lost her way home?

“Then we’ll figure it out,” he assured. “Didn’t I tell you? I’ll get you home. If I can’t get you back to your real world then I’ll *make* a place for you to come home to. I’ll become emperor and turn this hellish world into heaven if it makes living here a little more bearable for you. Whether it’s magic, or archeology, whatever you want. I’ll give everything for your happiness. I love you, Penelope.”

Her heart overflowed with the amount of love pouring from his every word.

She wanted to go home. It was her driving motivation to survive this game, but what did she have there that she didn’t have here? She had no family to return to, she had no money or friends. She filled her days with studying and working so hard she got constant stomach aches.

As she looked at Callisto and his words echoed in her mind. Whatever happened would happen. And he promised to be by her side, no matter what. That alone filled her with peace.

Her moment of relief morphed to confusion when Callisto’s facial expression turned to one of panic. “Oh, please don’t cry, I’m sorry. Whatever I said to make you upset, I’ll take it back.”

She touched her cheeks to find them wet again, for once from joy rather than anger or sadness. She couldn’t help but laugh at his horrified face and reassured him, “No, I’m just-, I’m really happy.”

The prince’s body instantly relaxed at her bubbly giggle. “Don’t scare me like that, princess,” he grumbled.

She smiled at his pout. “Callisto,” she said and touched his cheek. “I love you. Take me away.”

She felt him stiffen, then he crushed her in a hug, which she happily reciprocated.

“Your wish is my command,” he whispered into her ear.

After a few seconds, he pulled back and cupped her cheeks in his hands.

Penelope couldn't look away, mesmerized by the way his hair framed his face. The light hit him in a way that made Penelope swear he shimmered like a pile of gold coins. He beamed with the power of a thousand suns and in that moment, he was the most beautiful thing she had ever seen.

Time slowed and the space between them inched close. She could feel the soft puffs of air from his mouth and he whispered, "May I...?"

She closed her eyes and nodded. Just as their lips were about to brush together -

Her stomach growled *very loudly*.

Everything went still.

She could feel warmth flood her cheeks while a grin creped up on Callisto's face. A boisterous laugh erupted from him and Penelope covered her face with her hands.

I can't believe this is how my first kiss is interrupted.

"Stop laughing, I haven't eaten all day!" she cried in embarrassment.

Callisto stopped abruptly. She wasn't expecting him to actually stop and peeked through her fingers to find narrowed red eyes. "What do you mean *all day*? My love, it's *evening*."

She gulped but forced herself to sit tall. In her most haughty tone said, "You said you would give me anything I want, right? Well I want food now, go get me some."

He stared at her for a moment longer, looking as if he was going to argue when her stomach decided it was done waiting and growled with greater intensity.

He burst into laughter and she groaned.

In a last ditch effort to save her dignity, she commanded, “If you ever want the chance to kiss me again, prove it by getting me food.”

“Threatening and ordering an Imperial Prince around. Your impudence knows no end, does it?” Despite what he said, he was beaming from ear to ear.

He strode out the door to come face to face with Emily, who was waiting dutifully outside the room.

“You!” Callisto pointed to her. “Get your mistress ready to leave, and help her pack her belongings. You know what this means, right?”

Emily’s eyebrows raised in realization and she squeaked, “O-of course, your highness!”

Callisto nodded in approval. “Now if you could point me in the direction of the kitchen, I need to get Penelope some food.”

Emily’s eyes widened in alarm. “It is not proper for your highness to go to the kitchens! Please allow me to, or call someone else to!”

“And why not? I can bring food much faster than a maid. My princess desires food, and I am inclined to get it to her as fast as possible.” Callisto winked at Penelope.

Emily stammered weak protests but he turned and walked away down the hall.

Emily closed the doors once she watched Callisto turn the corner. She stared wide-eyed at Penelope. "My lady, is it time?"

She smiled, and that was all Emily needed to fly into action. They had already discussed what she may need if she decided to run away. Her maid scampered around the room, throwing a variety of items into a suitcase. The only person more excited to leave this mansion than her was dear Emily, who had been urging her to run if she ever got the chance. She was sure Callisto wouldn't mind another person coming along.

"Emily," she called. Her maid paused in her packing and faced Penelope with apt attention. "How would you feel working at the Imperial palace as my lady-in-waiting?"

Chapter End Notes

So... guess who forgot they had an exam on Monday and stayed up all night not studying?

Me. The answer is me. I forgot. I'm fucked.

Update: It was fine. I got a 92 after I copied 8 pages of notes and crammed. Don't forget to take notes guys.

I like to imagine Derrick heard about Penelope leaving and tried to stop her from taking Emily being like, "Emily has worked for this family for years, I will not allow you to steal her away because you're selfish! Emily you better come back or else I'll cut you pay and burn you recommendation letter!!" And Emily just looks at him and says "I quit", and walks out like a badass.

But anyways, that's it! Now imagine the rest of the story follows canon except, you know, better. Penelope and Callisto are on the same page a lot earlier so I would assume the story progresses a lot more smoothly.

Except no giant praying mantis monster this time, because that's a thing that happens in the light novel. Exclies also gets one shotted by a zombie dragon and Penelope is saved by a flower at one point so... yeah, shit's wack, but I love it all the same.

End Notes

If you have not read the light novel or forgot a few points, there should be snippets of relevant information in the notes at the end of each chapter!! Not important in the long run, but I hope they help.

Works inspired by this one

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